

The Honorable Richard Lugar
United States Senator, Indiana (1977-2013)
Keynote Address to the Feed the Future Global Forum
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[As prepared]

It is a great pleasure to join you this morning and to see so many good friends. I have long admired the work of USAID, and as a Senator I sought to support the agency's mission in every way that I could. Upon leaving the Senate, I wanted to continue my efforts to advance global development. During the last year, I have had the opportunity to build The Lugar Center, which is devoted, in part, to advancing global food security and constructive foreign assistance reform.

I thank especially Administrator Shah who has been a good friend and colleague. I appreciate the many occasions when we have worked to support each other goals. I am proud of what USAID is achieving through Feed the Future, and I am confident that progress will continue. I also would offer a special welcome to representatives of our Feed the Future partners.

My own interest in food security began 586 miles from here on a 604-acre farm in Indiana, which my father, Marvin Lugar, bought in the 1930s. I still manage the farm, which today sits within the city limits of Indianapolis. Our planting began on May 3, and when all is done, we will have roughly 200 acres of corn and 200 acres of soybeans in the

ground, to go with our acreage planted in Black Walnut trees.

Our chances of a bumper crop year-to-year are excellent, given the astounding array of technologies that our farm and most of American agriculture uses to maximize yield and protect the environment. Our farm is benefitting from genetically engineered seed, advancements in soil analysis, GPS mapping of the land, sophisticated weather forecasting, and numerous other technologies. Last year, we set a record for corn yield at 192 bushels per acre. This is roughly a fourfold increase from the yields we experienced on the same land when I was a boy. At that time, my dad was pleased when we achieved even 50 bushels an acre.

I relate this personal experience, to underscore that agricultural science is capable of delivering miraculous results. Humanity possesses the technology necessary to grow, store, distribute, and market a safe and nutritious supply of food. Having witnessed such an amazing transformation in the span of my lifetime, I have always been optimistic about the world's ability to produce food for the 9 billion people who are expected to inhabit our planet by 2050. We should look to the future with great hopefulness that we can dramatically reduce the number of people who are hungry.

But we are also realistic about the sources of hunger. We know that it usually arises out of circumstances related to poor governance, conflict, poverty, lack of infrastructure and credit, trade barriers, the disadvantages of women farmers, and many other cultural limitations to productivity.

The complexity of the problem demands that we have a plan that emphasizes efficiency and transparency and leverages our relationships with other countries, institutions, and donor groups. We should be focusing intently on what global agriculture should look like ten to twenty years from now and how we can get there. Even as we advocate strongly for more resources, we should not depend on receiving them. Instead, we must do a better job of applying research and science, breaking down trade barriers, facilitating the flow of agricultural knowledge, modernizing global regulatory institutions around scientific advances, and putting more meat on the bone of public-private partnerships.

We should put special emphasis on promoting transparency and other means to prevent corruption, which the World Bank has identified as “the single biggest obstacle to economic and social development.” This requires that agencies and donor institutions, including USAID, embrace transparency measures in the performance of their own functions. We should be forthcoming about where taxpayer dollars are spent, what goals they are meant to accomplish, and whether those goals are achieved. This is vital not only to provide taxpayers a clear picture of how their money is being used, but also to reinforce U.S. leadership in transparent economic development.

Like most of you, I admit to a preoccupation with the problem of global hunger. As a past Chairman of both the Agriculture Committee and the Foreign Relations Committee, a longstanding goal of mine was to develop and pass legislation authorizing a

comprehensive program to advance global food security. The culmination of these efforts was the Lugar-Casey Global Food Security bill of 2009. Lugar-Casey did not become law, but the bill and the reports on which it was based helped stimulate debate and established principles that were important to the foundation of Feed the Future.

I am pleased with the direction and progress achieved by Feed the Future, and applaud your emphasis on such core components as women and smallholder farmers. We will not end chronic hunger without ensuring that women and other smallholders have greater access to technology, credit, extension services, land tenure rights, advanced seeds and other components that large-scale farmers take for granted.

But in the context of domestic politics, further thought must be given to improving Congressional support for the program and for global food security efforts, in general. The prospects of any unauthorized program become uncertain with the change of administrations. Moreover, we have seen in recent Congressional actions how vulnerable initiatives that benefit global food security can be.

The recent step by the House of Representatives to increase the current Cargo Preference requirement on food from 50 percent to 75 percent could prevent timely food assistance from reaching millions of desperate people. It is important that the Senate remove this provision, both to preserve the lives at risk, and to avoid damage to U.S. leadership on food security.

Looming over all our hopes for eliminating hunger is the threat of climate change, because it has the potential to alter the basic assumptions upon which both global and regional agriculture function. All of us understand the rancor that has developed in the climate change debate. The issue exists not just as a scientific and economic controversy, but also as a political and social one. It is beyond the powers of those of us here to construct a political consensus on climate change. But if we care about feeding the world, we need to examine what practical steps should be taken to bolster food production in the context of climate projections. Just as the U.S. military has incorporated climate change into its planning, we must do the same.

Part of the response, I believe, must be overcoming the resistance to the use of advanced biotechnology in global food production. Biotechnology, including genetically engineered seed, will be absolutely indispensable over the long run to feeding 9 billion people in the conditions of a changing climate. Biotechnology cannot, by itself, guarantee that the world is fed. But without a broad application of this technology around the world our ability to expand food production to required levels will be seriously handicapped.

The hard work being done through Feed the Future demonstrates the American commitment to global food security. I believe that our nation's continuing devotion to this goal is an essential component of our status as a moral nation. Moreover, I believe that the United States, with its world famous land grant universities, its expert farmers, its successful agribusinesses, and its development professionals will be one of the key

determinants of whether our world will be hungry or food secure. I believe we are up to the challenge.

I applaud the commitment that each of you has made to global food security. I admire your dedication to the ultimate goal of eliminating hunger and malnutrition. I look forward to our achievements in the coming years, and wish you the best as you work to implement the most effective program possible.

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